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Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)
Grand Conseil des Cris (Eeyou Istchee)

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Cree Nation Government
Gouvernement de la Nation Crie

C. N. G.

Happy National Aboriginal Day

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This is a day for all to recognize and celebrate the unique heritage, diverse cultures and outstanding contributions of Indigenous peoples. For over 40 years, the Cree Nation has contributed to the advancement of the rights of Indigenous peoples across Canada and the world. Together as a Nation, to protect our rights and our land, we have found a way forward based on mutual respect and understanding.

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These same principals can lead us towards reconciliation. To reconcile is to recognize the truth of other peoples, to understand where they have come from. Reconciliation is about building relationships, building trust, addressing our differences. It's also about dealing with the past, while addressing how to move forward.

ᐁᐧᐊᑰᔨᐤᐦ ᐆᔨᐤᐦ ᒌᐦᑳᔮᐱᐦᑕᒧᐧᐃᓐᐦ ᒉ ᐧᐄᒋᐦᐄᑰᔨᐦᒄ ᒋᒌ ᒥᓄᐧᐋᑎᓰᔨᐦᒄ᙮ ᐧᐄ ᒥᓄᐧᐋᑎᓰᔨᐦᑵ ᒫᒃ ᒋᑲ ᐧᐄ ᓂᓯᑐᓇᒧᐧᐋᓄᐧᐃᔨᐤ ᒥᓯᐧᐁ ᐅᑖᐧᐯᐧᐃᓂᐧᐋᐤ ᐃᔨᔨᐧᐊᒡ ᓀᔥᑦ ᑖᓂᑌ ᑳ ᐅᑐᐦᑌᐧᑖᐤ᙮ ᔮᔨᑌ ᒫᒃ ᒋᑲ ᐧᐄ ᐋᐸᑎᓰᑲᐦᑌᓈᓇᐤ ᒉᒌ ᒥᔫᐸᔨᐦᑖᔨᐦᒄ ᑖᓐ ᑳ ᐃᔅᐸᔨᐦᒄ ᐊᓂᑌ ᐯᒋ ᐅᑖᐦᒡ ᒉᒌ ᐅᐦᒋ ᓃᑳᓂᐦᒡ ᐃᑐᐦᑌᔨᐦᒄ᙮

This is how Cree Nation has moved forward. Adapting, changing with the times, developing a balance and giving our people choices to preserve and maintain our values, our culture while pursuing greater autonomy of self-determination.

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We must continue to share our culture and history and display our rich heritage rich in tradition for all to enjoy. May we celebrate what makes us a unique and resilient Nation!

ᒋᑲ ᐧᐄ ᐁᑕᑕᐤ ᐃᐦᑎᓈᓇᐤ ᒉᒌ ᐧᐋᐸᐦᑎᔭᐧᐁᔨᐦᒄ ᐃᔨᔨᐤ ᐃᔨᐦᑐᐧᐃᓐ ᑲᔦ ᓀᔥᑦ ᒉᒌ ᒋᔅᑫᔨᐦᑖᑯᐦᑖᔨᐦᒄ ᑖᓐ ᐁ ᐃᔑ ᒦᔨᒋᔩᒪᑲᐦᒡ ᐃᔨᔨᐤ ᐃᔨᐦᑐᐧᐃᓐ᙮ ᐁᐧᐊᒄ ᒫᒃ ᒉ ᐅᐦᒋ ᐧᐄ ᒥᐧᔮᑕᒥᐦᒄ ᐆ ᐁ ᐃᓯᓈᑯᓯᔨᐦᒄ!

Grand Chief Dr. Matthew Coon Come | **ᒋᔖᐅᒋᒫᐦᑳᓐ** ᐧᑖᒃᑎᕐ ᒫᕢᐤ ᑰᓐ ᑲᒻ
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Constitutional closure

by Will Nicholls

The Cree Governance and Constitution package finally received approval from the Waskaganish Band Council on May 24, almost two months after every other Cree community had assented to the groundbreaking agreement.

It was almost too late to receive federal government cabinet approval, the deadline for which was May 22. Nonetheless, indications are that the Trudeau government will proceed with final approval to put ultimate power over Cree governance in the hands of the Cree of Eeyou Istchee.

The reasons and manoeuvres behind this critical delay are, at times, mystifying. The first reason given was to the effect that there wasn't enough time to consult all members of the Cree Nation.

Yet, we have all known for years that this was coming. It was back in 2008 that the Cree signed a New Relationship Agreement with Canada. Part of that Agreement was a commitment to negotiate a Cree Governance Agreement and to devise a Cree Constitution for the Cree to adopt. Since that time the Council Board received 11 reports.

Then, in September 2016, Council Board chiefs and members received a preliminary draft text of a Cree Governance Agreement. At this time, they agreed that the Cree Constitution would essentially be a cut-and-paste of the Cree-Naskapi Act as a transition measure.

In November 2016, all Cree chiefs and councillors met to look over the draft agreement. The chiefs asked for a review period lasting until March 2017 in order to consult their community members. The consultations began January 10 in Waswanipi and ended March 8 in Oujé-Bougoumou. The Waskaganish meeting was held January 31.

Another line of attack claims that Cree women were not consulted on the Agreement. And yet, every community held public meetings at which all members were invited to attend, regardless of gender. At all Council Board meetings, the Cree Women of Eeyou Istchee Association has had observer status since 2013. Former CWEIA president Virginia Wabano said attaining observer status had allowed the CWEIA to "move forward to building a relationship with leadership to address issues affecting women."

A third complaint, made at the recent council board meeting in Oujé-Bougoumou, said that the CWEIA had almost no funding or support from the Grand Council, and as a result, couldn't even participate in the Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women. However, previously the CNG had offered resources to ensure CWEIA participation in the Inquiry.

It is true that this is an election year and the truth can become muddled. Yet, every Cree must have access to the truth in order to make decisions that will affect the future of the Cree Nation as a whole. I always hope those who speak have the best interests of the people as their guide. The goal should always be to improve the lives of our people regardless of personal desires and aspirations.

My late grandmother, Mary Ann MacLeod, used to say that a conflict had to involve at least two sides, both of which were usually partly right and partly wrong. This is no doubt true. Perhaps some criticisms of the consultation were made without full knowledge of the issue or situation. However, we have a duty to correct the record. The consequences of undermining the legitimacy of the way we govern ourselves are too great.

Former Grand Chief Matthew Mukash recently posted on his Facebook page some wisdom that now comes to mind.

"There are days that I choose not to speak or think of others in a negative way," he wrote. "It was hard at first but now it's different. My Elder often said, 'The past is the past; each moment is an opportunity to take a step forward. Do it and you'll find peace in your heart.'"

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Serial negligence

by Dan Isaac | Photos by Damien Bouchard

Tensions between Indigenous community and Thunder Bay police at **all time high**

The body of 17-year-old Tammy Keeash was pulled from Thunder Bay's McIntyre River on May 7. On May 18, 14-year-old Josiah Begg's body was found in the same river. Both Indigenous teens went missing the night of May 6.

Keeash hailed from Weagamow (North Caribou) Lake First Nation, a community surrounded by water, and was a member of the Junior Canadian Rangers. Her death was quickly ruled a drowning by police despite "strong encouragement" from the Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) to treat the case as a potential homicide.

"We have lakes and rivers all over the 49 First Nations we represent," said NAN Deputy Grand Chief Anna Betty Achneepineskum. "And we have people who use alcohol but we don't find our people floating in the river in our communities."

Begg, from the fly-in community of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug (Big Trout Lake) First Nation, was accompanying his father to medical appointments in Thunder Bay at the time of his disappearance. The cause of Begg's death has been determined but is not being released to the media at the family's request. An investigation into his death is ongoing.

"It's disturbing, I was very frustrated with the lack of urgency that the police displayed," said Achneepineskum. "Our people wanted to have the river dragged and we were told by police there wasn't any evidence he went into the water. But with the number of our people who have been found in that river, we have historical reasons to believe that."

The cases of Begg and Keeash are the most recent in long line of alleged "drownings" of Indigenous youth in Thunder Bay. From 2000-2011 the bodies of five Indigenous teens were found in the McIntyre River: Curran Strang, 18; Jethro Anderson, 15; Jordan Wabasse, 15; Reggie Bushie, 15; and Kyle Morriseau, 17.

All the boys were living in Thunder Bay and attending Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School (DFC), a school for students from remote First Nations communities without secondary education institutions.

As with Keeash, the Thunder Bay Police Service (TBPS) ruled the boys' deaths as accidental drownings. The deaths of seven children who attended DFC – five of whom were found in the McIntyre River – were the subject of an inquest that concluded in 2016. The inquest made 145 recommendations and ruled that three of the seven deaths were accidental while the cause of the other four were undetermined.

During the inquest, in October 2015, the body of 41-year-old Stacie DeBungee was found in the same river. Once again, his death was quickly ruled an accidental drowning. But private investigator Dave Perry, who was hired

*We have lakes and rivers all over the 49 First Nations we represent… And we have people who use alcohol but **we don't find our people floating in the river** in our communities."*

- Deputy Grand Chief Anna Betty Achneepineskum

by Rainy River First Nation Chief Jim Leonard, found evidence pointing to the contrary.

DeBungee's debit card was used six times after his death, a detail that according to Perry should have been easy for Thunder Bay police to find. However, the TBPS never looked into the use of the debit card and to this day hasn't formally interviewed two witnesses who say they were with DeBungee the night before his body was found.

The gaps in the investigation into DeBungee's death triggered a systemic review of the TBPS, currently being conducted by Ontario's civilian police oversight body. The investigation is probing how the department treats the deaths of Indigenous peoples.

"It is the first time they have investigated an entire police service for institutionalized racism," Akwasi Owusu-Bempah, an assistant sociology professor at the University of Toronto, told the CBC.

At a May 31 press conference in Toronto, NAN Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler spoke of the disillusionment with the TBPS. "The recent losses of Tammy Keeash and Josiah Begg have once again confirmed the inability of the Thunder Bay Police Service to conduct competent and credible investigations into the epidemic of deaths of NAN and Treaty No. 3 community members in Thunder Bay's rivers," said Fiddler.

Ontario chiefs at the press conference demanded the RCMP step in to investigate the deaths – and to disband the TBPS.

"It's just a case of finding another dead Indian, a drunk Indian that rolled in the water – that is the feeling that we get from the community in Thunder Bay," said Rainy River First Nation Chief Jim Leonard.

On May 24 a letter to the editor was published in the Thunder Bay Chronicle Journal asking, "Is there a serial killer amongst us?" A theory also broached by AFN Ontario Regional Chief Isadore Day in an interview with the CBC: "Is there one individual, or a set of individuals targeting Indigenous people?"

According to media reports, at least two attacks near the river since 2007 involved a group of white men said to have attacked an Indigenous teen and thrown the teen into the river. Both teens survived, but the cases remain unsolved.

The apprehensiveness of the Indigenous community in Thunder Bay was further elevated by two attempted abductions that took place during the week of May 22. An Indigenous woman was also hit and badly injured by a trailer hitch thrown from a moving car in February.

"My partner and I have had the conversation about whether or not we want to raise our son here," Damien Bouchard, an Anishinaabe Thunder Bay resident, told *the Nation*. "It's tense. Some girls don't even want to walk by themselves in broad daylight."

It's a sentiment echoed by Deputy Grand Chief Achneepineskum. "Yesterday I was invited to give opening comments at City Hall for a walk supporting victims of crime. My office is only two blocks away and I found myself feeling quite nervous," said Achneepineskum. "A man came walking quickly behind me and I stopped suddenly to let him pass. He said to me, 'I'm sorry I startled you, but I understand why you're feeling that way.'"

Achneepineskum added that a young woman told her that she's thinking of carrying a weapon. "How can I tell that person not to if I don't feel safe myself. Of course, I discouraged her from doing that but it's sad that a young person thinks that's the only way to feel safe."

A grass roots Indigenous-led movement called the Bear Clan Patrol has taken to walking the pathways of the river since December. An uptake in volunteerism in the patrols has taken place since the two most recent deaths.

"I don't know what's happening but it scares me," Bear Clan patrol volunteer Jana-Rae Yerxa told the CBC. "It concerns me and I just think about if these weren't Indigenous youth, how would we be looking at this?"

Achneepineskum believes the community should take responsibility for the crisis.

"We need the city, police, media and non-Indigenous community to stop denying and acknowledge that there is systemic racism here," she said. "We also need to support our own people and ensure that, if they're assaulted, they're being treated properly by police and other people in power. And if

Quebec **commission**

Inquiry into Quebec-Indigenous relations underway in Val-d'Or

by Josh Grant | Photo by Lyle Stewart

Quebec's Public Inquiry Commission on relations between Indigenous peoples and certain public services in Quebec is more than just a mouthful of words. It's an opportunity to get things right, by ensuring that Indigenous people in Quebec receive fair treatment from provincial government, police and public institutions.

Hearings with Commissioner Jacques Viens started June 5 in Val-d'Or and will continue to June 20. Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come is one of three lead witnesses, alongside AFNQL Chief Ghislain Picard and the head of Quebec Native Women Viviane Michel. He will speak on June 14. The commission will also hear from Grand Chief Verna Polson of the Anishinabeg Nation Tribal Council, Lac Simon Chief Adrienne Jérôme, Edith Cloutier, Executive Director of the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre, Grand Chief Constant Awashish of the Conseil de la Nation Atikamekw and Val-d'Or mayor Pierre Corbeil, among others.

The Nation had the opportunity to ask Grand Chief Coon Come what his role in the commission entails and what First Nations throughout Quebec can hope to see come out of the process.

"My role in this first testimony will be to introduce to Commissioner Viens our history, both traditional and political, our structures, culture and traditions, and of course, the people of Eeyou Istchee," Coon Come said. "This will be an opportunity for us to introduce the commission to entities like the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay, the Cree School Board, the Eeyou Eenou Police Force as well as our associations: CWEIA, CNACA and COTA."

Coon Come noted that it is important to keep in mind that the commission is equipped with the power to subpoena. He stressed the fact that the introduction of the Cree Nation to the commission is not necessarily limited to June 14, as representatives of Eeyou Istchee could be requested to appear at any point throughout the inquiry, according to Viens' discretion.

Asked to explain what the inquiry could mean to the James Bay Cree and First Nations across the province, the Grand Chief remembered the stories of First Nations women who came forward to share their stories of abuse and spoke to the reality of life as an Indigenous individual living in Quebec.

"Thirty-eight allegations of abuse at the hands of police officers, brought to light by a handful of Indigenous women who were brave enough to stand up, is what brought this commission to life," said Coon Come. "The reality of Indigenous people must be considered and mechanisms of justice capable of responding to these realities will also have to be considered if there is any sincerity in wanting to address the issues of systemic discrimination brought forth."

The inquiry is not limited only to police services, it will also include correctional, justice, health and social services as well as youth protection. "This is the time for the Indigenous community to shed light on the injustices, discrimination and abuse experienced by our people," Coon Come stated.

"For this commission to instill changes as a result of its efforts, participation will be necessary," he concluded. "This is an opportunity to hear solutions to the challenges encountered by our people and any change that occurs because of it must consider the solutions brought forward by Indigenous communities."

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Nine Crees complete police training

A cohort of 13 Indigenous graduates, nine of them Cree, walked across the stage to receive diplomas from Collège Ellis May 26 for completion of the AEC Police Technology program.

The AEC Police Technology Program is taught in English and offered exclusively to people with Indigenous ancestry. Its aim is to develop skills within Indigenous students that will assist in the pursuit of a career in law enforcement.

There are both academic and physical components to the curriculum, and students are expected to participate in simulated real-world police interventions while they train at the college in Drummondville.

The preparatory program promises its graduates will be better prepared upon completion of the course to continue their training at the École nationale de police Québec (Quebec police academy) in Nicolet.

"The hope is to train enough Indigenous police officers to replace non-Indigenous officers currently working in Indigenous communities," said Daniel Guillemette, the coordinator of the Police Technology program at Collège Ellis and a former SQ officer.

"Due to the shortage of Indigenous officers, non-Indigenous officers are hired to work in Indigenous communities. The problem with non-Indigenous officers is that they will work for a year or two and then return to the city."

Applications are currently open for the next session to tentatively start in January 2018. For more information on how to register in the program you can visit www.ellis.qc.ca.

In Brief

Trudeau asks **Pope Francis** to apologize for residential schools

During his travels to Italy for the G7 summit, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau met with Pope Francis at the Vatican on May 29 and made good on his promise to ask the pontiff to issue a formal apology for the role of the Catholic church in Canada's residential schools.

Established in the 1880's and finally eradicated in 1996, the system led to countless cases of abuse against Indigenous youth and children and scarred multiple generations of First Nations families. While the Vatican did not comment on Trudeau's request, it said the meeting was "cordial" and "focused on the themes of integration and reconciliation, as well as religious freedom and current ethical issues."

"I told [Pope Francis] how important it is for Canadians to move forward on real reconciliation with Indigenous peoples," said Trudeau after the meeting. "And I highlighted how he could help by issuing an apology."

Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission has also called for an apology from the pope, saying that it would help residential school survivors move forward in their healing process.

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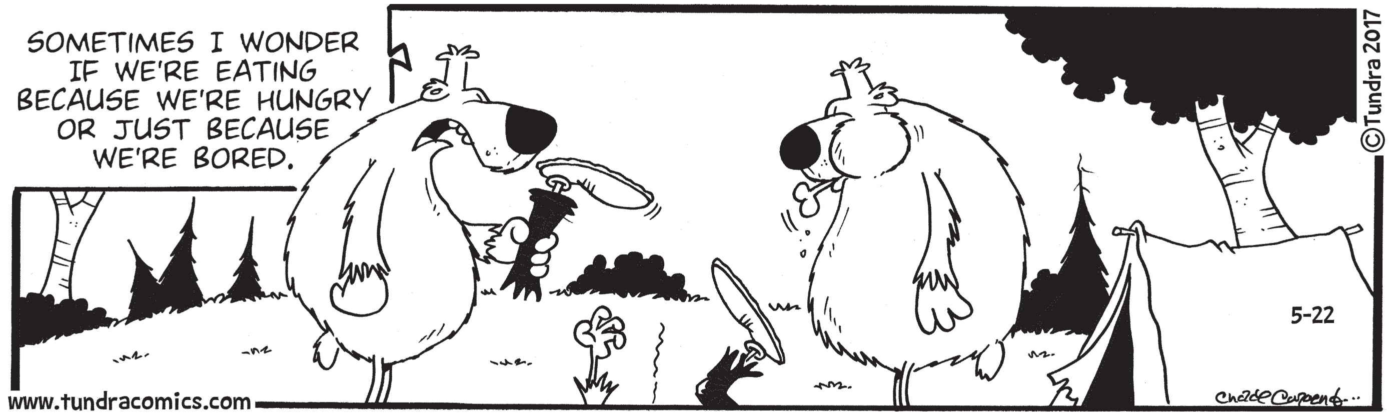
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SOLSTICE CELEBRATIONS

APTN Announces **Aboriginal Day Live**; Events Planned in Val d'Or, Chibougamau

by Dan Isaac | Photos provided by APTN

An impromptu freestyle rap announced the line-up for the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network's (APTN) 2017 Aboriginal Day Live (ADL) at a press conference livestreamed on Facebook May 25. "It's 8 am in LA, so this has got to be the earliest freestyle I've ever done," said California-based hip-hop artist Red Cloud before jumping into the improvised rap.

Prior to the freestyle, APTN CEO Jean La Rose, an Abenaki from Odanak, welcomed the crowed gathered at the Winnipeg Art Gallery to Treaty I territory. An Elder then said an opening prayer and La Rose encouraged all in attendance to participate in a smudge.

Canadian Heritage Minister Mélanie Joly participated in the conference via video message and spoke of Aboriginal Day as a time to unite Canadians under the banner of reconciliation. "This is a great opportunity for all Canadians to come together in celebration of the rich cultural heritage of Indigenous peoples," said Joly.

> ***"This is a great opportunity*** *for all Canadians to come together in celebration of the rich cultural heritage of Indigenous peoples"*
>
> *- Canadian Heritage Minister Mélanie Joly*

'RESILIENCE'

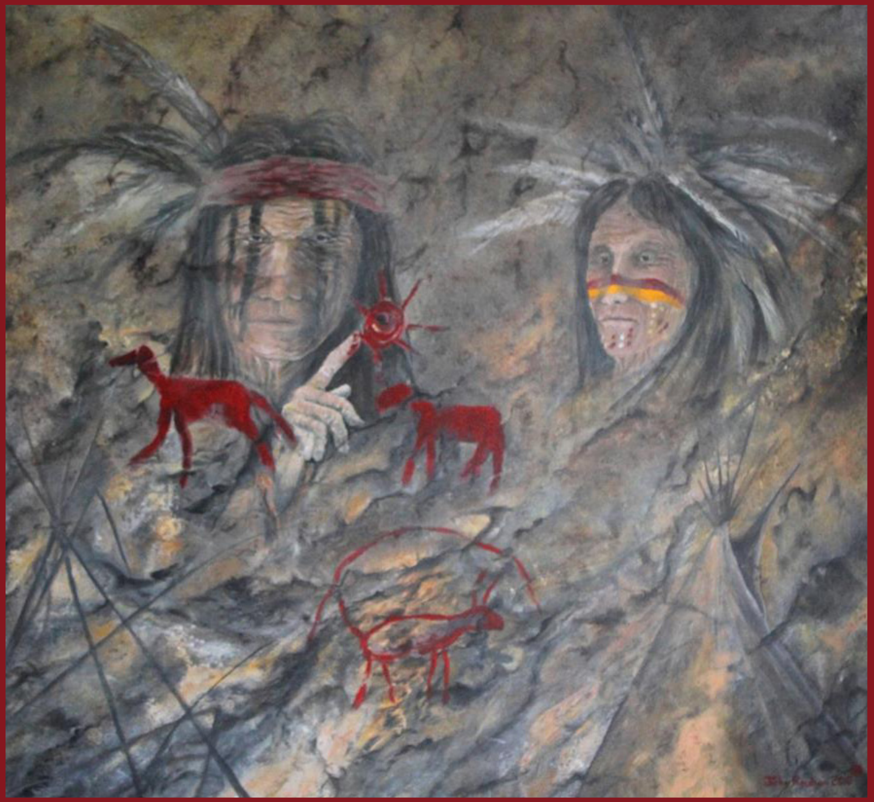
Painting and story by John Reuben

As I was working on this painting, I wished I knew a lot more of the historical trauma that occurred to multiple generations of Aboriginal people. I am not a politician or a historian in any way, but I do attempt to share my interpretation or tell "my story" through my paintings.

After hearing Justin Trudeau's speech, seeing the individual and community Aboriginal movements plus my own personal experiences facing racism, negative comments and hearing people's lack of understanding (or lack of willingness to learn), my interest in cultural/traditional paintings has been renewed.

There is so much to say and a lot to cover, but one of the words I often think of is "Resilience". In this painting I tried to capture the feeling of a strong cultural continuity and pride, leading the way to a new level of growth and a strength that needs to be reawakened.

Despite several lifespans of cultural/identity suppression and forced assimilation, Aboriginal people have survived and are re-emerging. We have always been here and will always be here... If they only knew, the writing is on the wall!



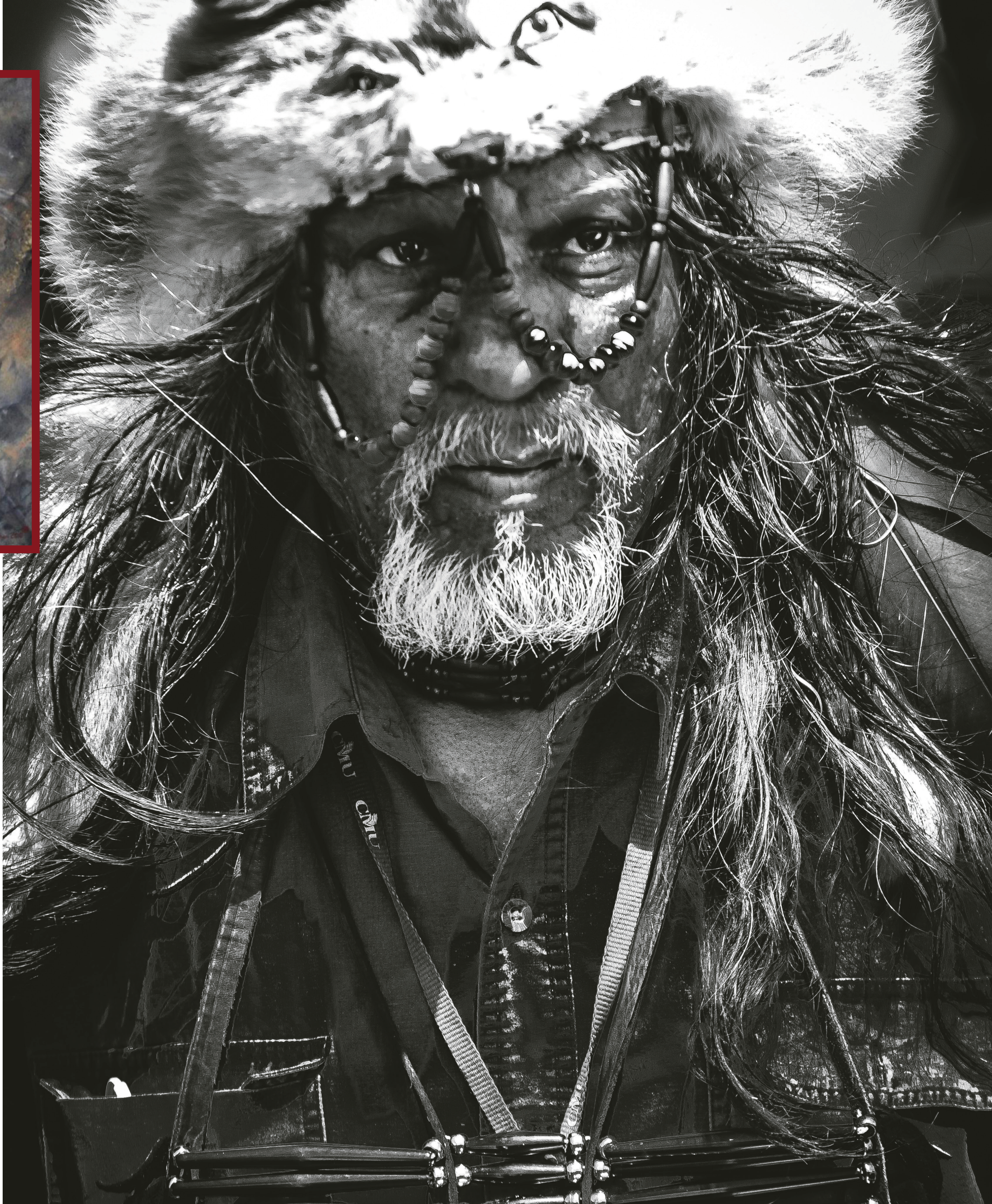
> "We are celebrating way more than [150 years]...Our people have been here for 15,000 years minimum, and likely way more than that."
>
> *- APTN CEO Jean La Rose*

With federal government financial support to the tune of $2 million through the Canada 150 Fund, the 11th annual ADL will be the largest to date.

"Our government is proud to support this presentation by APTN of the marvellous celebrations in eight Canadian cities," said Saint Boniface–Saint Vital MP Dan Vandal. "I encourage all Canadians to take advantage of the National Aboriginal Day festivities with family and friends to celebrate our diversity."

La Rose sees this year's ADL as a way to honour a history that predates Canada. "We are celebrating way more than [150 years]," he said. "Our people have been here for 15,000 years minimum, and likely way more than that."

The seven-hour ADL concert will be broadcast June 21 from 7 pm to 2 am Eastern Standard Time on APTN and livestreamed on APTN.ca. The concert will be staged in eight cities across the country: Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto,



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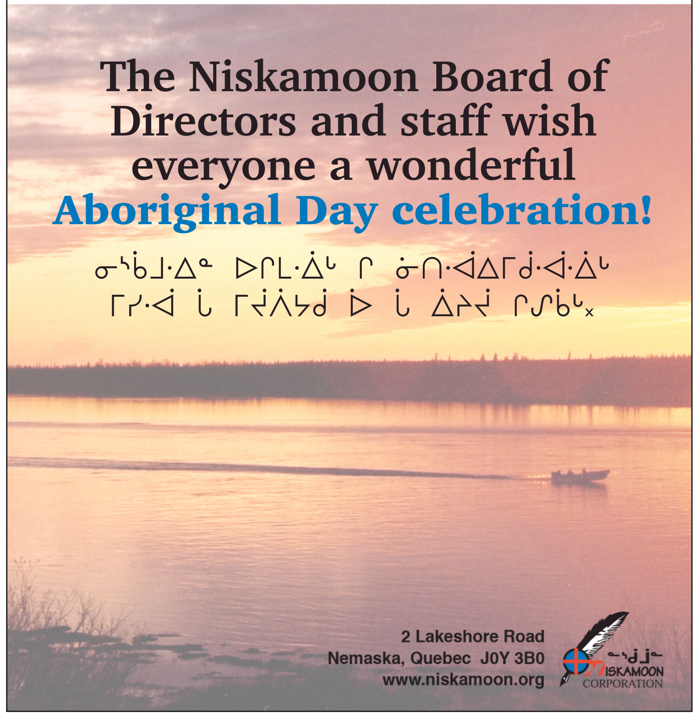

The Niskamoon Board of Directors and staff wish everyone a wonderful **Aboriginal Day celebration!**

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The 7-hour ADL concert will be broadcasted on June 21 from 7:00pm to 2:00am Eastern Standard Time on APTN and live streamed on APTN.ca.

Winnipeg, Yellowknife, Edmonton and Vancouver.

Performances during the cross-country event will include Classified, Derek Miller, George Leach, Iskwé, LightningCloud, Nelly Furtado, Radio Radio and Taboo of Black Eyed Peas.

Each city will host a full day of festivities, with cultural and interactive activities during the day and a concert in the evening. For full schedules and concert line-ups visit aboriginaldaylive.ca.

La Rose also announced a special APTN project: two new Indigenous music channels will be launching on multiple media platforms sometime in July. "We have amazing talent, they're incredible, and they deserve to be heard," noted La Rose. "And they will be heard online, on satellite, on radio."

But if you're looking to celebrate closer to home, Aboriginal Day festivities are also planned in Val-d'Or and Chibougamau.

The Chibougamau Native Friendship Centre will be hosting Aboriginal Day festivities June 21 on their grounds at 95 rue Jaculet. The day will begin with a sunrise ceremony, followed by a walking-out ceremony, and will include feasts, games, demonstrations and dancing. More info go to their Facebook page: www.facebook.com/eenoukamikw/

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Aboriginal Day in Val-d'Or:

a celebration of pride, friendship and sharing

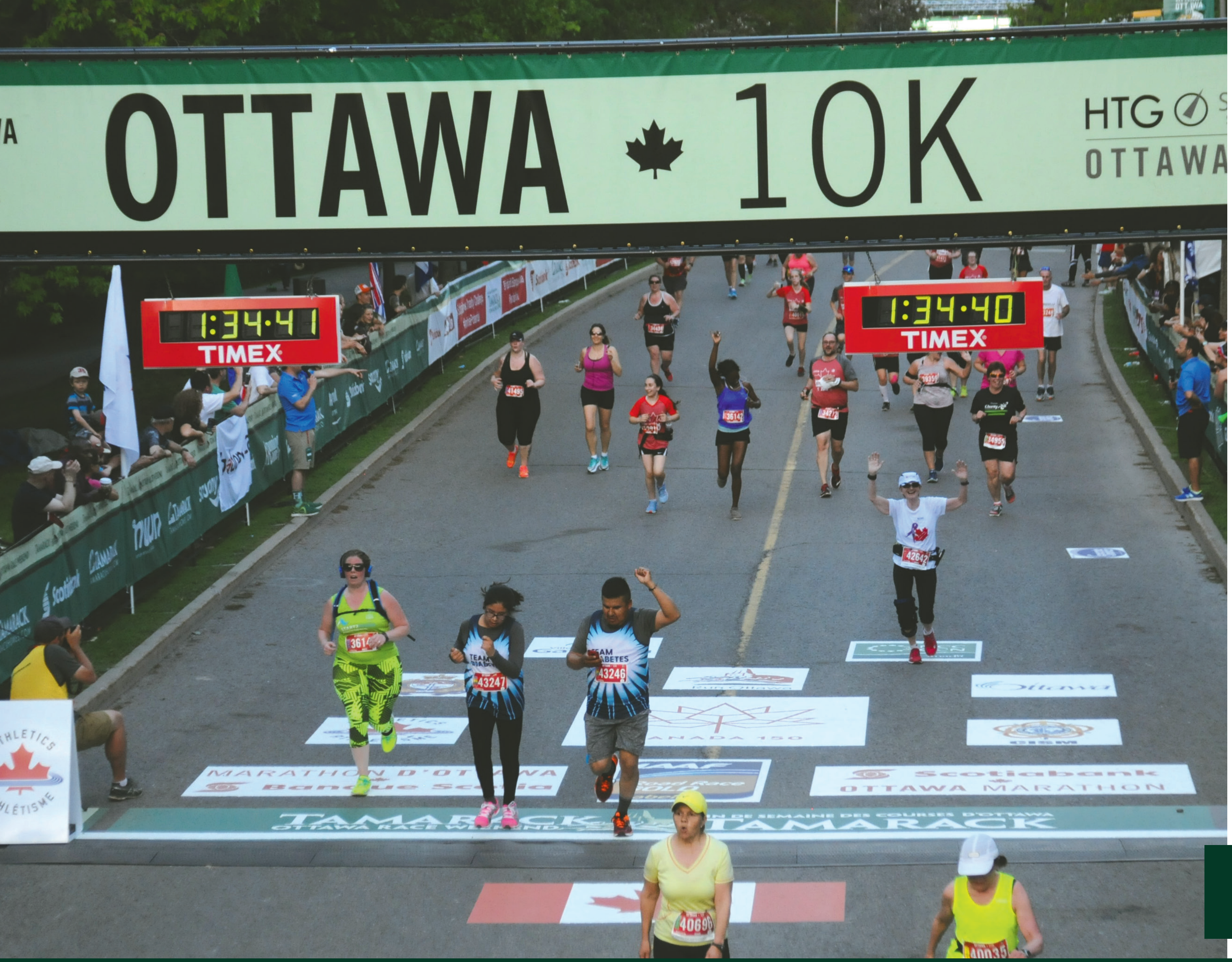
by Joshua Grant
Photos by Paul Brindamour

Val-d'Or's Aboriginal Day celebrations will be held "in the heart of the Anicinabe territory" on the shore of Lake Lemoine with a ground breaking ceremony taking place in town later that evening. The Val-d'Or Friendship Centre issued a press release detailing its plans for the holiday, centring on an open house and inauguration ceremony at the all new Kinawit cultural site. created by the centre to give a glimpse into the "millennia-old richness of First Peoples."

On tap for the open house event, which runs 1:00 to 4:30 pm at 22 chemin de Scout, are traditional dance, songs and drumming, traditional food tasting, children's activities, forest trail hikes, guided tours and Aboriginal arts and crafts exhibitions and souvenir sales. A shuttle service will be available from the Friendship Centre in Val-d'Or to the Kinawit site.

Aboriginal day will also mark the ground breaking ceremony for Val-d'Or's Kijaté social housing project, an initiative to provide affordable homes for Indigenous families in the city. The Friendship Centre hopes that the Kinawit and Kijaté projects will be "beacons of hope and symbolize reconciliation between our peoples."

"The Val-d'Or Friendship Centre is a service hub, a living environment and a cultural anchor for First Peoples," said Director Édith Cloutier. "Dedicated to wellness, justice and social inclusion, it promotes harmonious coexistence in its community."



Photos provided by Jamie Moses

On the run

by Jesse Staniforth

Eastmain family runs 10k in Ottawa for diabetes

> *“To be healthy, you have to move. In my family, there’s diabetes – my aunt, my mom, my late grandmom, they all had diabetes.* ***I’m at a high risk****, so I’m trying to be physical”*
>
> *- Cindy Moses*

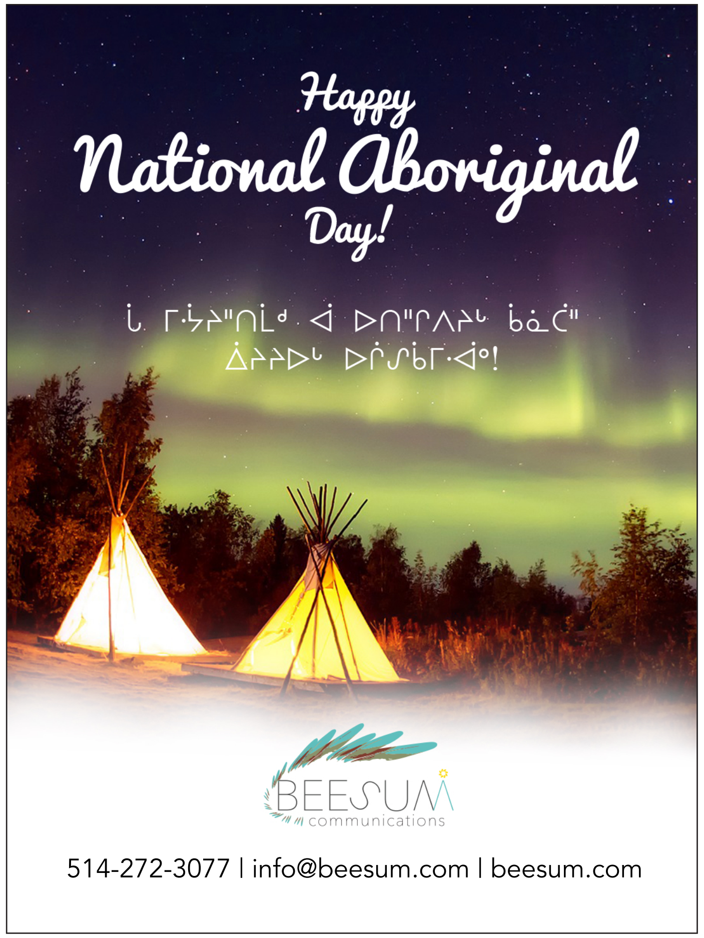
Travelling long distances on foot is nothing new for Crees. But the culture of running long-distance races for fun is still a modern phenomenon in the Cree Nation. As communities encourage health and wellness, and locals try to figure out what kind of physical activity they can make a routine, more and more Crees are discovering that running is a natural fit for them.

Eastmain’s Jamie and Cindy Moses, and their eldest daughter Joni, are one group who are getting serious about their running. This year, the trio signed up to run the Ottawa Race Weekend 10k race, held on May 27. Ottawa’s weekend of road races is one of the biggest in the world, and more than 10,000 runners participate in the 10k race alone. The Moses trio took their place in the crowd to raise funds for Team Diabetes, promoting diabetes awareness, but they were also doing it for themselves.

“I do it for my health,” Cindy said. “To be healthy, you have to move. My family, there’s diabetes—my aunt, my mom, my late grandmom, they all had diabetes. I’m at a high risk, so I’m trying to be physical. I needed motivation to be active. Jamie asked me one day, and I decided to go ahead and join. It’s the healthy thing to do. But it can be hard.”

“We wanted to introduce our eldest to running,” Jamie said. “It gives her some responsibility to have a goal. We try to teach our children goals in life and working toward them, achieving them. It was a lesson for our daughter to go to an event, and to work together and do fundraising like the way we’ve been doing the last few weeks.”

Jamie and Cindy are road-race veterans: over the past several years, one or both of them has run 21-kilometer half-marathon races in Vancouver, Ottawa, Niagara Falls, Cayman Islands, and Iceland. They have also been running in the annual Chisasibi Run each August, which they note is getting


Happy National Aboriginal Day!

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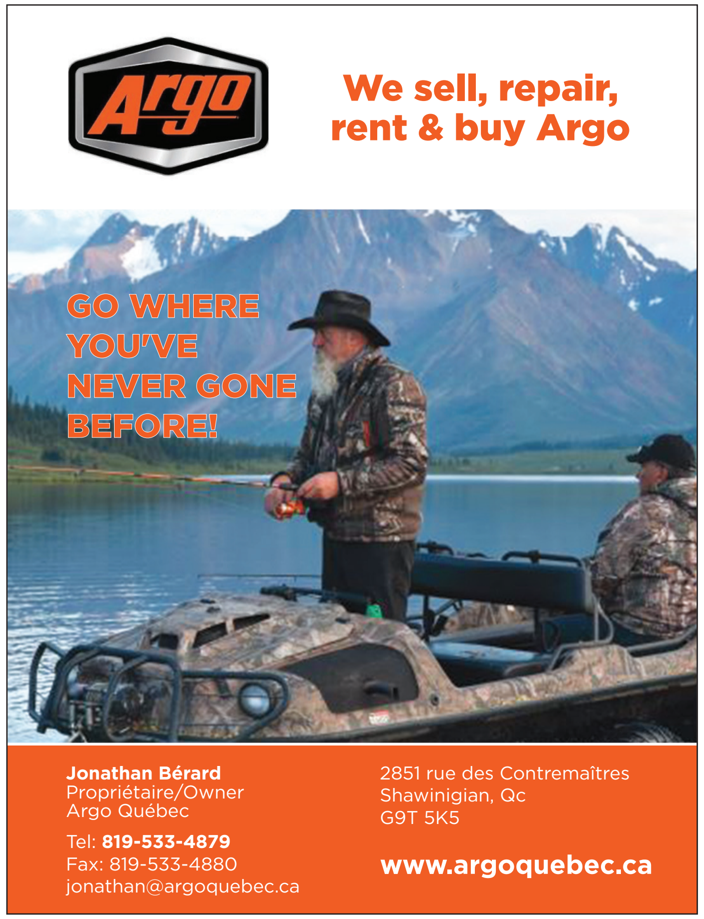
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more and more organized and drawing a greater variety of runners with each passing year.

"Our first run we ran on our own in Vancouver," said Jamie. "It was a goal between me and my wife to go on a trip somewhere far away from home. She was more comfortable going to a Canadian destination than going to the States or somewhere else. To get motivation to go, we registered for a 21k fall half-marathon in Vancouver. We ran a half-marathon in Ottawa two years ago, with Team Diabetes. That same year, we ran Niagara Falls."

Team Diabetes saw how enthusiastic Jamie and Cindy were about running, so suggested they sign up for an international event. The minimum fundraising goal was $350, but Jamie and Cindy each tripled that amount. From that point, they were guaranteed a spot, but they needed to select an event. The only one that fit their family schedule was Iceland: it wasn't on the top of their list, but it was what worked.

"It was a really good trip and it exceeded our expectations," Jamie continued. "So we thought we'd introduce one of our children to run with us, and start off with our eldest."

Joni described running as "a new adventure."

"Seeing my parents go to cool destinations and go running at events, I wanted to take part in that," she said. "That was one of the reasons I started and I wanted to go."

Jamie points out that Joni is a natural on foot. This year in the Eastmain snowshoe races, she placed first in her age group.

"I'm getting a little bit older and a little bit chunkier—I've lost my title," said Jamie ruefully. "There's a teacher who's a competitive runner and he won this year. I was away this year, but last year I came in second."

Three years ago, when Joni was only ten, she joined her parents on the Winter Journey and covered 100km in a week.

"She was very impressive," Jamie said. "At ten she was so little that she didn't need snowshoes to walk on the trail where all of us needed them. She did extremely well, and everyone was encouraging her and telling her how proud

> *At 10 she was so little that she didn't need snowshoes to walk on the trail where all of us needed them. She did extremely well, and everyone was encouraging and telling her how proud they were. That was her first big challenge physically.*
>
> *- Jamie Moses*

We wish everyone a great
National Aboriginal Day

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they were of her. That was her first big challenge physically."

Jamie—who has run since he was a teenager, doing 12km loops around his community—likes to beat his own best time. Cindy prefers to mostly walk, with some running thrown in now and then. They both like the 21km half-marathon distance, but this time around they opted for 10k to make sure Joni would find it welcoming.

"I'm not going to run my best time, but I'm going to run my daughter's time," said Jamie. "Wherever she starts, I'm going to start, and run with her, walk with her, and cross the finish line with her. Cindy told us, 'Leave me behind if I fall behind, just do your best.'"

Because the Ottawa race is at the end of May, training is interrupted by Goose Break. That was bad enough for Jamie and Joni, but it was even more of an impediment for Cindy, who'd missed the chance to snowshoe all season. She started preparing for the 10k only a few weeks ago, with walks and squats. But she notes that normally she'd be running 21k, so maybe it will balance out.

Nonetheless, she enjoys walking and running as an activity and misses it when she doesn't have the opportunity to do it.

"I think about our ancestors when I'm out there," Cindy said. "They would walk all day. For me, it's just a few hours. And even that can be hard sometimes. I feel connected to the land when I walk—it feels good, especially when we walk up the road, where there are no houses. It's all trees, all natural. But one thing that bugs me is the bugs. During the summer it's pretty bad. Right now, there's not so much."

The plan for the future is to wait and see how Joni feels after her first major road-race. Jamie is hungry for more races: he'd like to do a marathon. Cindy would like to do another 21k. But all of them would like to run as a family, perhaps bringing some of their younger children to join them in future events.

"The decision for where we go next we'll leave up to our daughter," Jamie said. "If she enjoys it, we'll sign up for a fall event for a father-daughter trip."

by Martin Siberok

TOP OF THE POPS

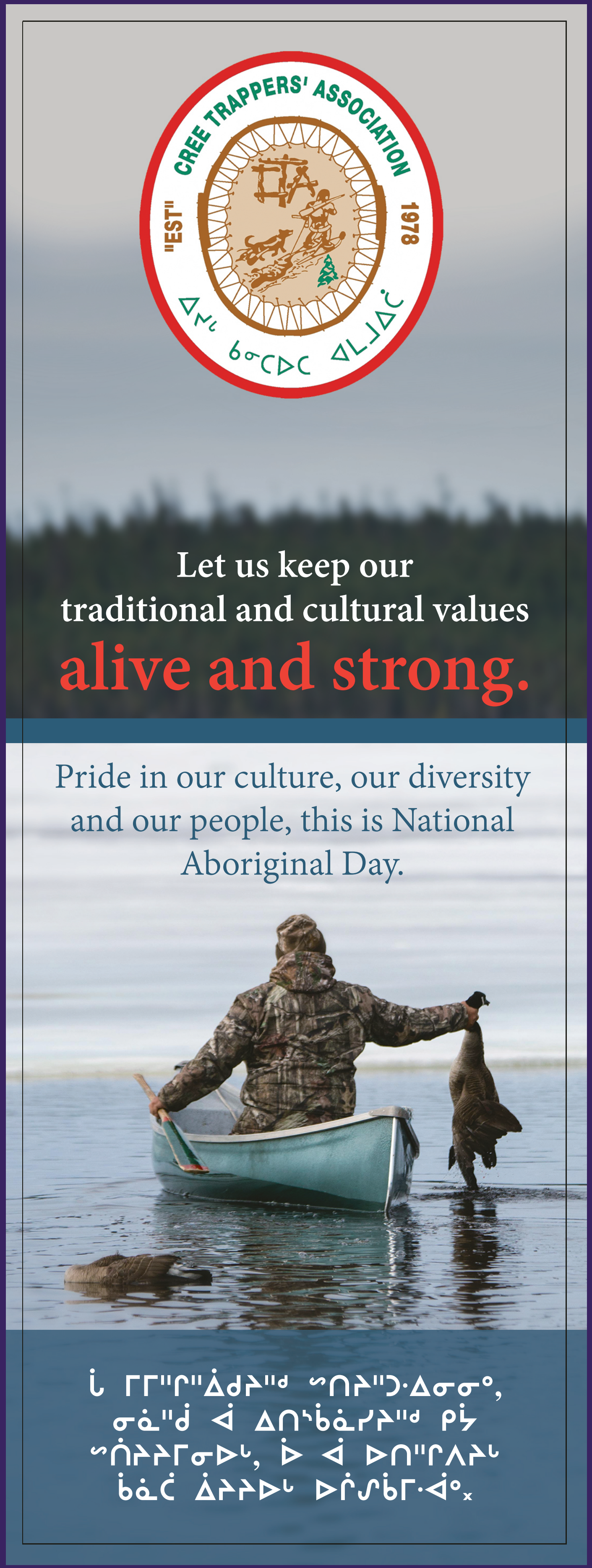
Cree singer Mariame's debut album *Bloom* wins at Indigenous Music Awards

The Indigenous music industry in Canada has upped the ante and decided to add a more professional sheen to its annual awards show.

Previously known as the Aboriginal Peoples' Choice Music Awards, the event has re-emerged after a year's hiatus and been re-branded as the Indigenous Music Awards.

Held at the Club Regent Event Centre in Winnipeg May 19 as part of the Manito Ahbee Powwow, the event honoured the achievements of Indigenous artists and industry professionals from Canada and around the world.

Photo by Jen Doerksen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Country artists Kimberley Dawn and Jerry Sereda hosted the sold-out gala. Besides handing out awards in 18 categories, the ceremony featured live performances by Fred Penner, Crystal Shawanda, Northern Cree, Christa Couture, Kimberley Dawn and Eeyou Istchee's own Mariame.

One thing the event underlines is the wide variety of musical genres Indigenous artists perform – ranging from country music to powwow to blues to rock.

Mariame, who was nominated in two categories, walked away a winner when her debut recording, *Bloom*, was named Best Pop Album.

The event honoured **the achievements of Indigenous artists** and industry professionals from Canada and around the world.

"I was sitting there, and when I heard my name I was stunned," said the elated singer, who was up against a strong group of contenders.

The other nominees in the pop album category were Awaken Aries (*The Extraordinaries Anthology Vol. 1*), Carsen Gray (*Carsen Gray*), Jace Martin (*Mighty*), Native Roots (*Most High*) and Tara Williamson (*Songs to Keep Us Warm*).

Some of the notable winners that evening included Haida/Cree singer-songwriter Kristi Lane Sinclair, who won best rock album for *Dark Matter*; DJ Shub, formerly of A Tribe Called Red, who picked up best instrumental album for his solo debut, *PowWowStep*; and Haida musician Carsen Gray, who was named best new artist on the strength of her self-titled album.

The award for best radio program went to *Unreserved*, CBC's weekly show hosted by Rosanna Deerchild, who does a first-rate job covering Indigenous Canada from coast-to-coast.

Besides the 18 award categories, a Lifetime Achievement Award was also handed out. This went to Northern Cree, the veteran drum group from Alberta. The group also won for Best Hand Drum Album with *It's a Cree Thing*.

Photo by Jen Doerksen

Eeyou Istchee James Bay
Regional Government

The Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government encourages you to discover and celebrate the National Aboriginal Day!

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2017 AWARD WINNERS

At this year's gala event, a total of 18 awards were handed out. What made selection process different this year was that a jury of their peers chose the winners. Previously, when the awards were called the Aboriginal Peoples Choice Music Awards, fans were able to vote and pick the winners.

Best Blues Album
Cradle to the Grave, Cary Morin

Best Country Album
North Country, Jade Turner

Best Folk Album
Goodbye Goldia, Logan Staats

Best Inuit, Indigenous Language, or Francophone Album
Kisakihitan, Rhonda Head

Best Instrumental Album
PowWowStep, DJ Shub

Best Pop Album
Bloom, Mariame

Best Rap/Hip Hop Album
#GreyMagic, Joey Stylez

Best Rock Album
Dark Matter, Kristi Lane Sinclair

Best New Artist
Carsen Gray, Carsen Gray

Best Radio Single
Pretty Little Nightmare, Black & Grey

Best Music Video
Revival, District Avenue

Best Producer/Engineer
Derek Miller for Goodbye Goldia

Best International Indigenous Release
Imbaya Full Flavour, The Imbayakunas

Best Radio Station Program
Unreserved, CBC

Best Peyote Album
Water is Life, Wanita Bird & Joe PoorThunder

Best Hand Drum Album
It's a Cree Thing, Northern Cree

Best Pow Wow – Contemporary Album
Celebration of Life, Blackstone

Best Pow Wow – Traditional Album
Belongs to the People, Young Bear

Photo by Adam Collier

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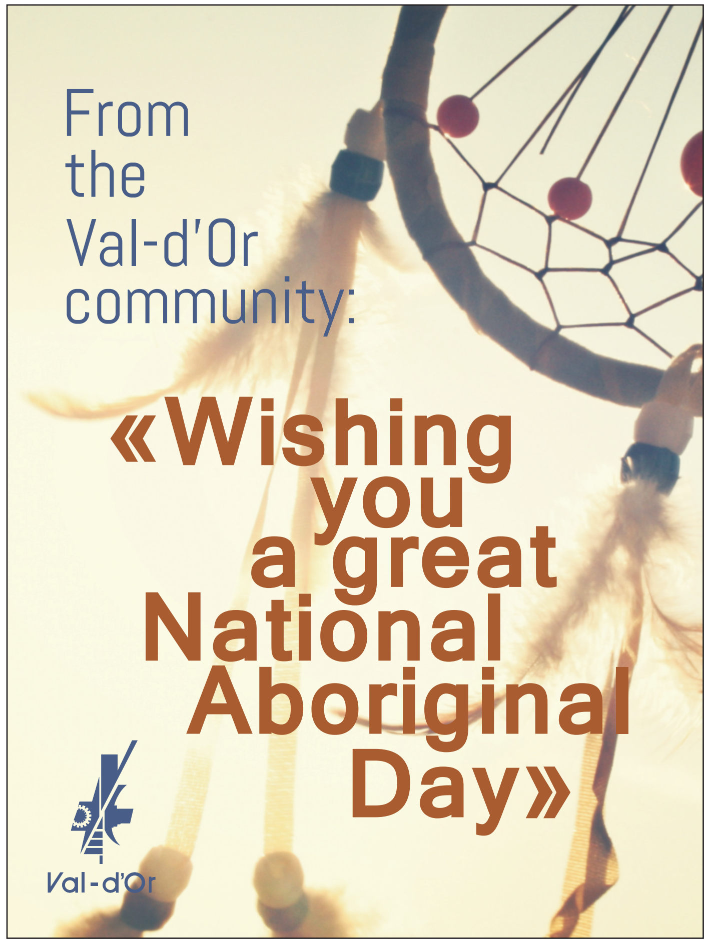

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Mentoring youth in care

How a few hours a week can change someone's life

by Amy German | Photos by Mike Phang & Catherine Orr

While Eeyou Istchee usually manages to keep Cree children with Cree families, Indigenous children from across Quebec often end up in urban group homes for a myriad of reasons. And every one of them could use a mentor who is Indigenous and proud, just like they should be.

Many Indigenous youth find themselves with foster families or group homes in Montreal. Some were seeking long-term medical care and needed any available housing. Others have passed through the juvenile detention system and are receiving ongoing supervision.

Whatever the case may be, these youth have been removed from their own people, culture, language and even cuisine. That's why giving them a mentor can be "life changing," according to Larissa States, the Iohahi:io Coordinator at the Native Women's Shelter of Montreal who runs an Indigenous mentoring program for youth in care.

The mentor, usually a college or university-aged student who is succeeding in school and is well adjusted to city life, devotes a few hours

Department of
Justice and Correctional Services
·ᐃᔮᐢᑯᓂᓛ·ᐃᓐ ᑭᔮ
ᑯᔨᐢᑯᓂ·ᐋ·ᐃᓐ ᐋᐱᑎᓰ·ᐃᓐ ᐋ ᐅᐦᒋ ᓈᓈᑭᒋᐦᒌᑭᓂ·ᐃᒡ

ᐃᔨᔨᐤ CAVAC ᐋ ᐱᒥᐱᔨᐦᒌᑭᓂ·ᐃᒡ
(ᑳ·ᐃᓂᐦ≠ᑑᑎ·ᐋᑭᓂ·ᐃᒡ ᐊ·ᐋᓂᑦ ᐋ ᐅᐦᒋ ·ᐄᒋᐦᐋᑭᓂ·ᐃᒡ)

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ᓵᐦᒋᒦᐦᒡ CAVAC ᒪᓯᓇᐦᐄᓚ·ᐃᑲᒥᒄ
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TECHNICAL SERVICES, to assist crime victims in filling out required forms
REFERRING VICTIMS TO SPECIALIZED SERVICES, such as appropriate legal, medical, social and community resources capable of assisting victims as they attempt to deal with problems they face
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Cree Central CAVAC
31 Mewaben Meskino,
Eastmain, QC J0M 1W0
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www.creejustice.ca

a week to a young person in need. But what they are providing is something more than a touchstone to Indigenous culture, it gives them someone who will believe in them, someone who can intervene when they fall off of their path.

"When you're in an unfamiliar place and don't see other people who look like you, it is a huge thing," explained States. "I had the experience of growing up on the west coast but I am Ojibway from Ontario. I did not look like the west coast Aboriginals. The city I grew up in was about 60% immigrants, and that is totally fine, but I had no exposure to my own culture except through my mother."

Becoming a mentor to an Indigenous child in care isn't just about helping out with homework or teaching them how to succeed academically, it's about showing them how to be an Indigenous person with pride, living in a large city with many dangers.

The dangers of the big city were evident in recent years when a group home in Laval was targeted by a prostitution ring, going after young Québécois girls.

"When you grow up in the system there are barely any Indigenous families who can take in kids, so they are never placed with people they can relate to or understand," said States.

"Mentors have a real potential for empowering the Indigenous youth in their charge. This is something that's necessary with kids in the system because they don't feel as though they are a priority to anyone."

Statistically speaking, most missing Indigenous women don't disappear from a reserve but from urban centres.

"They need that someone there to say 'you can do this, this is what you can achieve' and show them how they can leave behind the things that hold them back. They can develop cultural pride and empowerment and learn their potential for success by having someone who believes in them. And, it really doesn't matter if the youth and the mentor are from different Nations," said States.

The goal behind the project is to have Indigenous youth in the system learn how to function and gain self-esteem in their new environment. Frequently, kids leaving the justice system or moving to the city from a rural community do not have street sense and feel lost in an urban setting. Being in care can induce feelings that they are unwanted, uncared for and don't belong. These emotions are exactly what certain predatory people will play on.

"Mentorship can be like having that brother from another mother or sister from another mister – just because you aren't blood related doesn't mean that you cannot be family. And, with that comes the influence of having someone positive in your life who is a person you can trust and who is going to be there for three hours every week and be your encouragement and empowerment," said States.

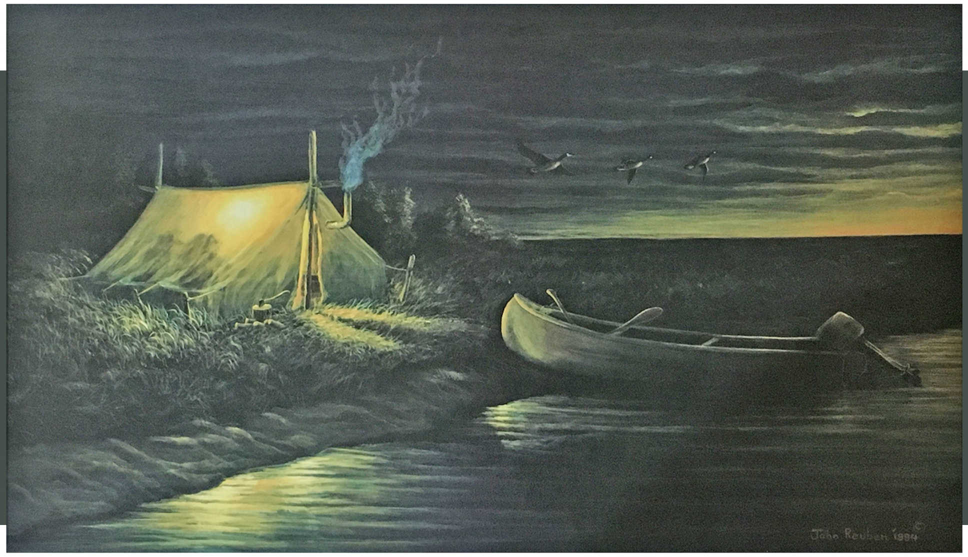
"Becoming someone's mentor may be the thing that saves their life or saves them from a fate that is so much worse because you are giving them that love that you would have for siblings. Or say you are away from your home community and missing your community, you can get that sense of community for yourself with that foster kid because you can care for them like you would your sibling or cousin."

Young people are often placed in group homes because their home life did not provide them with the opportunities they needed to learn about healthy relationships and boundaries. While a 14-year-old girl in care may want to date an 18-year-old young man, it is in situations like these that a mentor can intervene, explain where the line is not to be crossed and empower the youth to maintain their boundaries.

A mentor who helps a kid learn these skills can turn their life around. For more info about how to become a youth mentor in Montreal, contact Larissa States at stateslarissa@gmail.com

Artwork by John Reuben

Titled: September's Harvest
Size: 16' x 30"



For more information and other art work:
Cell 705-465-1342 | Email reuben@onlink.net | Facebook John Reuben Artwork (photo album – Limited Edition Prints)

Our best wishes to all Aboriginal people on this National Aboriginal Day

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The City and Mayor wish you

BONNE FÊTE NATIONALE AUTOCHTONE

HAPPY ABORIGINAL DAY

ᒥᓯᐧᐋ ᒑ ᒥᐧᔮᔨ"ᑎᒑᑯ ᒑ ᐅᑎ"ᒋᐱᔨᒡ ᑳᓈᑖ ᐄᔨᔨᐅᒡ
ᐅᑏᔑᑳᒥᐧᐋᐤₓ

Manon Cyr
Mairesse/Mayor

I wish you all a great
National Aboriginal Day!
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Cultural diversity is what makes our region so beautiful!
As we celebrate the 21st edition of the
National Aboriginal Day, let us highlight your culture,
history and realisations.

ᐧᐋᔑᓐ ᓃᓇᑰ ᐋ ᐄᑏᔅᑲᓇᓯ"ᐃᑰ ᐋᐆ"ᑯ ᐧᐋ ᒋ ᒥᐧᔮᔑᒡ ᔅᑎᔅᒌᓈ!
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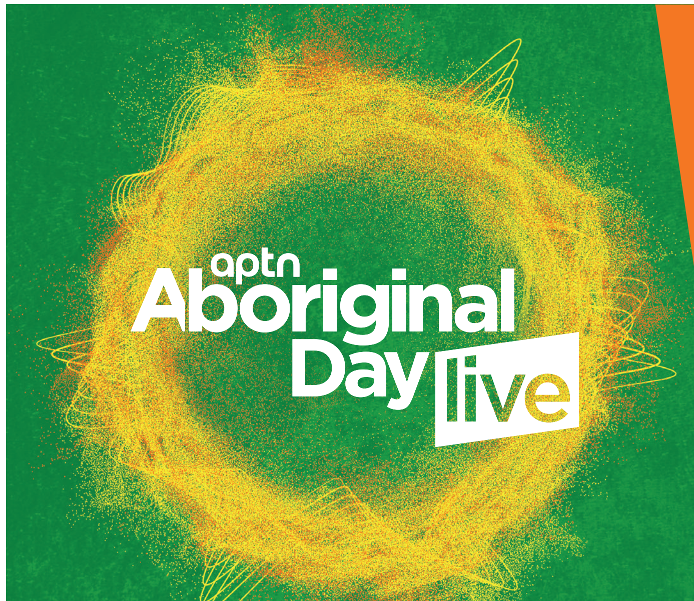
ASSEMBLÉE NATIONALE
QUÉBEC

Jean Boucher, Député d'Ungava

Député d'Ungava / M.N.A. for Ungava
Adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Forêts,
de la Faune et des Parcs

Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Forests,
Wildlife and Parks



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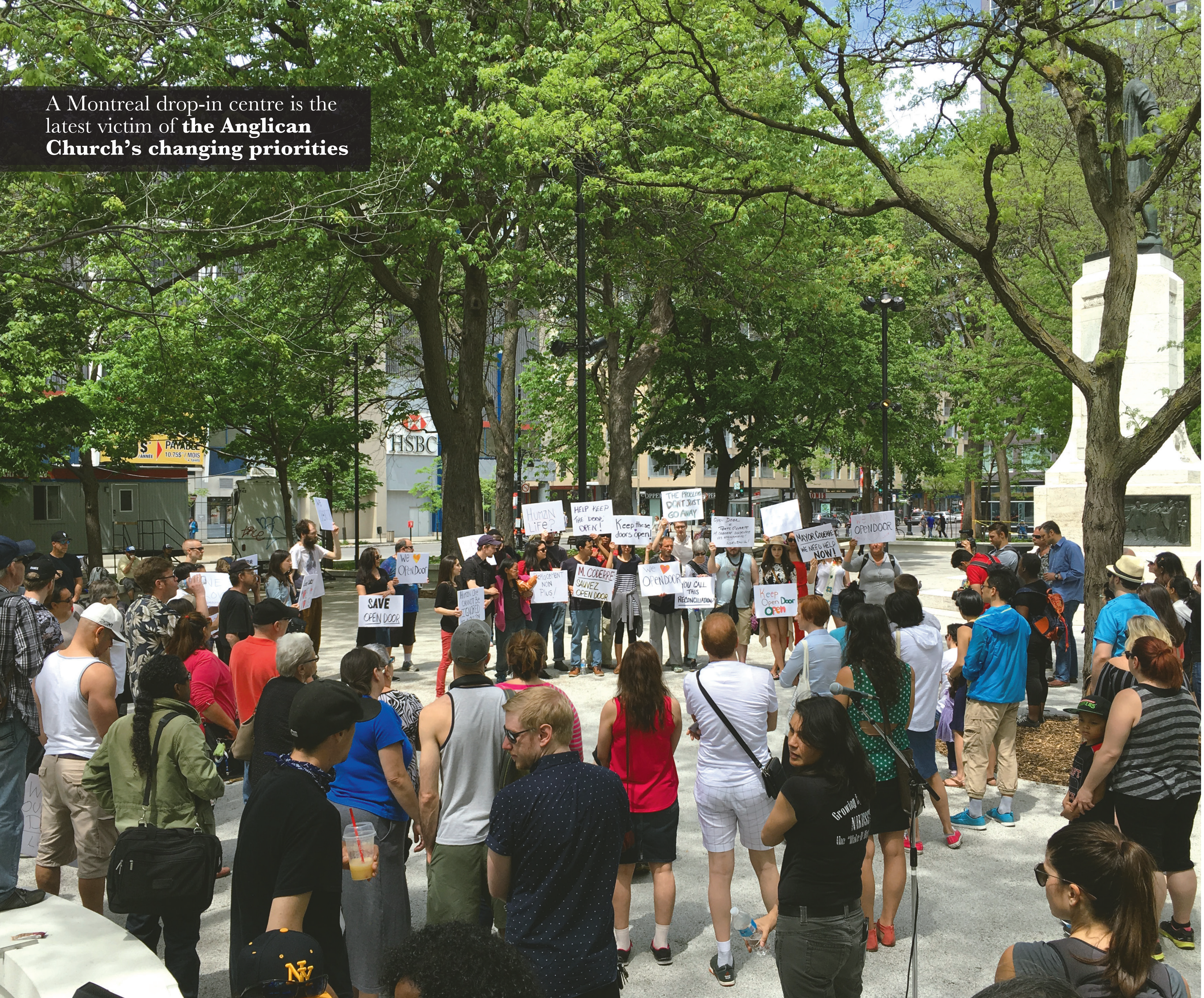
L'ESPACE CITOYEN DE VIDÉOTRON

A Montreal drop-in centre is the latest victim of **the Anglican Church's changing priorities**



CLOSED DOOR

Photos & Story by Jesse Staniforth

Less than 48 hours after the call went out, a crowd of 100 gathered at Montreal's Cabot Square May 28 to rally support for the Open Door drop-in centre. Serving the homeless and marginalized in Montreal's downtown west end, the Open Door has been an integral lifeline for many of the Inuit and other Indigenous homeless people who congregate around Cabot Square.

Located in nearby St. Stephen's Anglican Church, the Open Door called for help after receiving a letter from the Anglican Diocese of Montreal saying the building has been sold and that they would have to find a new location by July 31.

The Anglican Diocese will not release the name of the buyer for the church, but general speculation is that it is likely been purchased as part of developer Devimco's $400-million project to turn the former Montreal Children's Hospital and surrounding buildings into condominiums. The Diocese offered $30,000 to the Open Door to help it relocate.

"Unfortunately, the building is not adequate to their needs and we can't afford to make it suitable to their needs," Bill Gray, an executive archdeacon at the Diocese told the Montreal Gazette. "We will offer any assistance we can to them, we absolutely value the

Happy National Aboriginal Day!

The Cree Nation of Mistissini wishes
everyone a Happy National Aboriginal Day!
Let us continue to keep our culture and
traditions alive and strong.
Celebrate this day with pride.

ᒉ ᒥᔦᔮᐦᑕᒣᐤ ᐁ ᐅᑎᐦᑭᐸᔮᐦᒡ ᑳᓈᑖᐦ ᐄᓅᒡ ᐅᒌᔑᑳᒥᐙᐤ!

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> *"When the settlers came here **we gave you food and water** and a place to live. It would be really nice if this society could do that for our Indigenous people."*
>
> *- Nakuset*

work they do and believe in their mission."

At least 40 percent of Open Door's clients are Indigenous. Because it doesn't have the same zero-tolerance rule for drugs and alcohol that other shelters do and because it welcomes dogs, the centre is a beloved institution with the area's homeless community.

Speaking to the rally on a sunny Sunday afternoon, Native Women's Shelter of Montreal's executive director Nakuset noted the irony that when the rally was over, many of the people would get to go home.

"But the people who use Open Door are going to wait until Monday to go home," she said. "We can't just move the Open Door somewhere else – it has to stay where it is. They have 26 years of experience. I'm not sure why [the Anglican church] thinks they should just reinvent the wheel. It already works."

David Chapman, acting director of the Open Door, stressed that the centre needs a large space with enough room for a nurse's and social workers' offices, 50 beds, a social area, and other services – and in a neighbourhood where property values are booming, that's hard for a homeless organization to afford. However, he remains optimistic.

"There are some things you can't close down," Chapman told the crowd. "When people love one another, and treat each other with dignity and respect, you can't stop that. They can try to move you or shift you to another location, but there's something that stays with a person when they touch the core of humanity. They have a memory, and it remains."

Putulik Qumak, who has been a client of the Open Door for years, broke into tears as he addressed the crowd.

"It's a very supportive people, their staff," he said. "Every day I go there, every weekday. Their service is very helpful. I go there for breakfast, to do laundry, hang out with my friends and my family, and it's hurting us right now. It's hurting me too. Where am I going to go if it's gone?"

Nakuset noted that Mayor Denis Coderre and Aboriginal Affairs Minister Geoff Kelley have both pledged support for the Open Door.

"But I want to see action, I don't want to see words," Nakuset told the crowd. "I want to be able to have the Open Door stay open, and if the Archdiocese knows who the buyer is, let's have a discussion. Speaking as an Indigenous person, when the settlers came here, we gave

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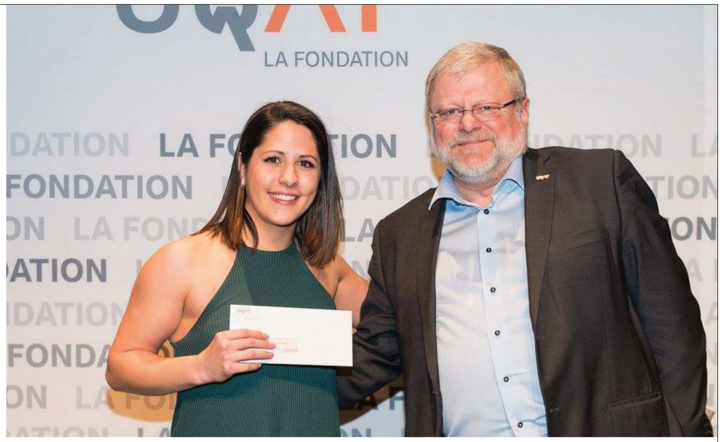
Excellence Scholarships - First Nations Programs awarded to **Sophia Cheezo** by **Josée Falvo**, from Air Creebec and **Jean Simard**, from UQAT.



Meggan Mathias-Cossette, Student in Social Work (French program) receives her scholarship from **Denis Martel**, from UQAT.

HUMAN CREATIVE VISIONNARY

The *Fondation de l'Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue* and the *Corporation de développement de l'enseignement supérieur de la Vallée-de-l'Or* recognized two Aboriginal students as recipients of academic scholarships, for the excellence of their academic record, their involvement in the community and their courage in returning to school.

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you food and water and a place to live. It would be really nice if this society could do that for our Indigenous people. But until they do, I'm going to be here to put pressure on you."

Church Controversy

St. Stephen's will be merged with St. Jax (formerly St. James the Apostle) on Ste-Catherine Street a few blocks to the east, which from 1985 until last year was home to the St. James Drop-In Centre. In May 2016, the newly re-branded St. Jax announced that it would only renew the Drop-In's lease if homeless clients entered the church through the alley in the rear, and refrained from behaviour that the church considered inappropriate.

"It was explicitly codified in the new lease agreement – they didn't want homeless members visible to churchgoers as they go through a process of re-branding and revitalization for the church," James Falconer, the St. James' day-centre administrator, told the Gazette last year. "They're attempting to attract a new congregation. Codified in the lease proposal was a provision that site discipline would be enforced by the church. That involved taking photographs of our homeless members in compromising and vulnerable situations in order for us to enforce discipline on those members. We found the photos objectifying and humiliating."

> *"When people love one another, and treat each other with dignity and respect,* ***you can't stop that.*** *They can try to move you or shift you to another location, but there's something that stays with a person when they touch* ***the core of humanity."***
>
> *- David Chapman, acting director of the Open Door*

The St. James Drop-In was subsequently forced to reopen 7.5 kilometres to the east, far away from the downtown homeless community. These two closures reflect the bishop's controversial vision of the way the Anglican Church should deal with homelessness in Montreal.

A member of the Montreal Anglican community who wished to remain anonymous told *the Nation* that the closure of the Open Door is a symptom of an enduring problem within the Diocese. Barely six months after shutting out the St. James Drop-In last spring, they noted that the bishop's luxurious Westmount townhouse was profiled in the Montreal Gazette's "Shelter" section. Just a week before St. Stephen's received its eviction notice, St. Jax publicly celebrated "Police Week" in a neighbourhood where police officers have been accused of racially profiling Inuit people.

To the anonymous Anglican, this is indicative of a Church that is moving away from helping the poor, downtrodden and marginalized, and focusing instead on those with money and power.

"This closure of the Open Door is yet another thing in a chain of questionable decisions for the Anglican Church in Montreal," said the source. "The Church has a responsibility that they have completely shirked here and in other places. I would love to know how much they spent on the St. Jax renovation that got rid of the drop-in centre at St. James the Apostle."

On behalf of the Chairman,
the Board of Directors
& staff of the Board of Compensation
and the entire Creeco group,
we wish you all an enjoyable National Aboriginal Day.

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We need community members' input, suggestions and comments concerning housing in the Cree Nation.

Of Woodstock & other festivals

by Sonny Orr

We were young people with a mission – to inform the people of Fort George Island that beyond the waters of the great river there was a magical land comprised of world-renowned musicians. It started with the influx of Bobby Sherman-covered magazines that were targeted at young women, but we also read them. This was at the height of bubblegum music when the Archies had captured top spot on the Billboard charts. This was real American culture overflowing to the North, competing for your attention and your hard-earned bucks. It was a time of change.

Then, for some reason, the cultural powers decided organize a film festival showcasing Cold Journey, starring Buckley Petawabano. Buckley was a seasoned actor by the time the National Film Board decided to make a film about little Charlie Wenjack, a residential school runaway who froze to death beside the railroad tracks on his long journey home. Other movies about North American Indians, as we were called back then, featured music provided by Willie Dunn, a.k.a. Uncle Willie. These movies were topped off with major Hollywood pictures, portraying our collective cultures to the people of Fort George. Little Big Man, starring Dustin Hoffman and Chief Dan George, impacted us greatly, making some audience members cry during the massacre scenes.

The pièce de résistance was the much-anticipated Woodstock documentary on the famed music festival. We prepared all the massive speaker systems we could find to the single phono jack plugged into the 16mm projector, sat back and watched history unfold in front of our dazed eyes. The community got a good idea of what really happens at rock concerts, while we, the new generation, just got into the whole film and music. After all, who gets to watch Woodstock with 16 speakers? And mud baths?

Today, my young daughter tells me she'll be going to a big music fest with six stages and two days and nights of all the new music bands. My mind instantly remembers the weird stuff that happened 40 years ago. Just stay away from any ride, I told her. I know a guy who fell off one and got international attention about his body hitting hard metal as he plummeted down a Ferris wheel. He miraculously survived because his muscles were softened by the first hit on the way down, and he eventually made it to the nearest hospital that would admit him. Haven't heard of any insurance claims, but you never know.

Music fests can be dangerous; do you hear me my little girl? Sorry, the worry is getting to me already. But heck, if the old man can survive two solid years of attending every rock concert except for one or two, then I guess it's okay. I'm still okay.

One infamous rock venue was the Moustache, just across the street from the old Montreal Forum. My cousin, who was into heavy metal, wanted to see this particular band play one night, so we hopped on a bus in Ottawa and headed to Montreal. After paying a $2 entry fee and passing the no hidden knife search, we walked into the dimly lit rock joint.

A drum solo was well underway and we decided to move closer to the front, since there were so many empty seats. There we watched the drummer play upside down for a good 10 minutes before he rolled into the upright position and the rest of the band slowly sauntered back onto the stage. Seconds later, the raucous yelling, the jagged rhythmic banging, the bass blowing out an underpowered amplifier, the lead guitar screeched a closing string and cymbals clattered to the floor.

A few claps echoed alongside the persistent electric buzz, before we realized our eardrums were still resounding. The bus ride home was anticlimactic as we headed back to our sheltered boarding homes, having the Sunday morning to rest and call home about our adventure. Today, I expect to be constantly updated with GPS coordinates.

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Navigation conditions in the Rupert diversion bays

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To watch the new video, visit **www.hydloandfriends.com**

To assess navigation conditions in the Rupert diversion bays, a team conducts helicopter flyovers and travels on the river, identifying constraints in the navigation corridors. A map is then produced to support the navigation activities of the Crees.

Georges Neeposh
Tallyman, Trapline M25, Mistissini

Navigation in the Rupert diversion bays

Philip Neeposh
Field worker, Mistissini

Each month, a new video will be added to hydloandfriends.com. To learn more, listen to the Hydlo and Friends radio show on JBCCS. Its hosts, Luke MacLeod and Luc Duquette, discuss the environmental follow-up activities related to the Eastmain-Sarcelle-Rupert complex, as well as the concerns of land users with regard to Hydro-Québec's facilities and activities.

Next show:
Wednesday, June 14,
at 8:00 a.m.

Under the Northern Sky

What's on your **playlist?**

by Xavier Kataquapit

UTNS

I may be out of touch but I will never have a **shortage of music**

I feel old these days. I can really feel a sense of my life experience when I compare music with younger people. I have an eclectic taste in music and enjoy the great variety there is in the world.

I took a drive with some teenagers and was introduced to melodic songs by Imagine Dragons, The Weeknd and even Justin Bieber. I had a dose of hip hop and then a barrage of modern rap by the likes of DJ Khaled, Ugly God, Rae Sremmurd and Lil Uzi Vert. I found some common ground through electronic dance stuff like Daft Punk and classic rockers like Queen but all in all, I was completely lost. I had suspected my taste in music was outdated and during this drive, it was confirmed. I've lost touch with modern pop music.

I tried to share some of my playlist but almost felt embarrassed because my music probably sounded like I was introducing ancient recordings from a gramophone. Then I began to realize just how much my music tastes have varied over the years.

As a child growing up on the James Bay coast, the first music I can remember was my parents singing Catholic hymns in church. Mom sang high with the other women and dad had a low bass with the men. The sound of Cree lyrics sung to the melody of centuries-old Latin hymns is something that will stay with me forever. Every time I hear those old recordings, I immediately envision our old church filled with all our passed Elders, hunters, trappers and traditional people.

I grew up surrounded by old-time fiddle tunes. My uncles Gabriel and Leo played the fiddle and step danced. By the time I was a teen they had slowed down but there were a few occasions I witnessed their playing to the shouts, cries and dancing of community members. Now, whenever I hear songs like "Bread and Butter", I laugh remembering the mischievous smiles of my uncles with fiddles under their chins.

At home, mom and dad had a collection of country-recording artists like Hank Williams, Johnny Cash, Hank Snow, Loretta Lynn, Tammy Wynette and George Jones. I listened to Hank Williams so much in those days that those lyrics are burned deep into my memory from tunes like "I Saw the Light", "Kaw-liga" or "Jambalaya". I enjoy listening to old country when I am working because it reminds of being with my family.

As a boy, much of my music was 1970s rock from groups like the Eagles, Led Zeppelin, Nazareth and Creedence Clearwater Revival.

There was also a period when I grew fascinated with classical music and opera. Listening to CBC radio late at night, I initially believed that the sounds of flutes, brass and strings were all made by people with really talented ways of using their voices. In regards to opera, I could not understand how the human voice could sound so amazing.

In the 1980s, my brothers and I liked big-hair metal bands like Def Leppard, Whitesnake, Quiet Riot, Megadeth, Motley Crue and Cinderella. We also had a hold-over to country with Blue Rodeo and Alabama and singers like Willie Nelson and Steve Earle. Bands like Guns n' Roses, Metallica, Skid Row, Aerosmith, U2 and Poison remind me of my first years of high school. The early 1990s brought in dance, techno and hip hop. As I went into my later high school years, I listened to some rap and could appreciate the social angst of performers like Notorious B.I.G., Tupac, Coolio and NWA.

It wasn't until later in life and after decades of censorship that I could appreciate and enjoy traditional drumming and singing. There is something powerful and heart moving in listening to a form of music that has been part of my people's tradition and culture and played on the land for thousands of years.

Now my playlist is a strange mix of several decades of music from a variety of styles and genres including 1960s, Motown, rock, heavy metal, soft rock, rap, hip hop, pop, classical, opera, old country, new country and techno. I even have a few recordings of my parents singing old Catholic hymns.

I may be out of touch but I will never have a shortage of music to choose from and that helps to keep me sane.

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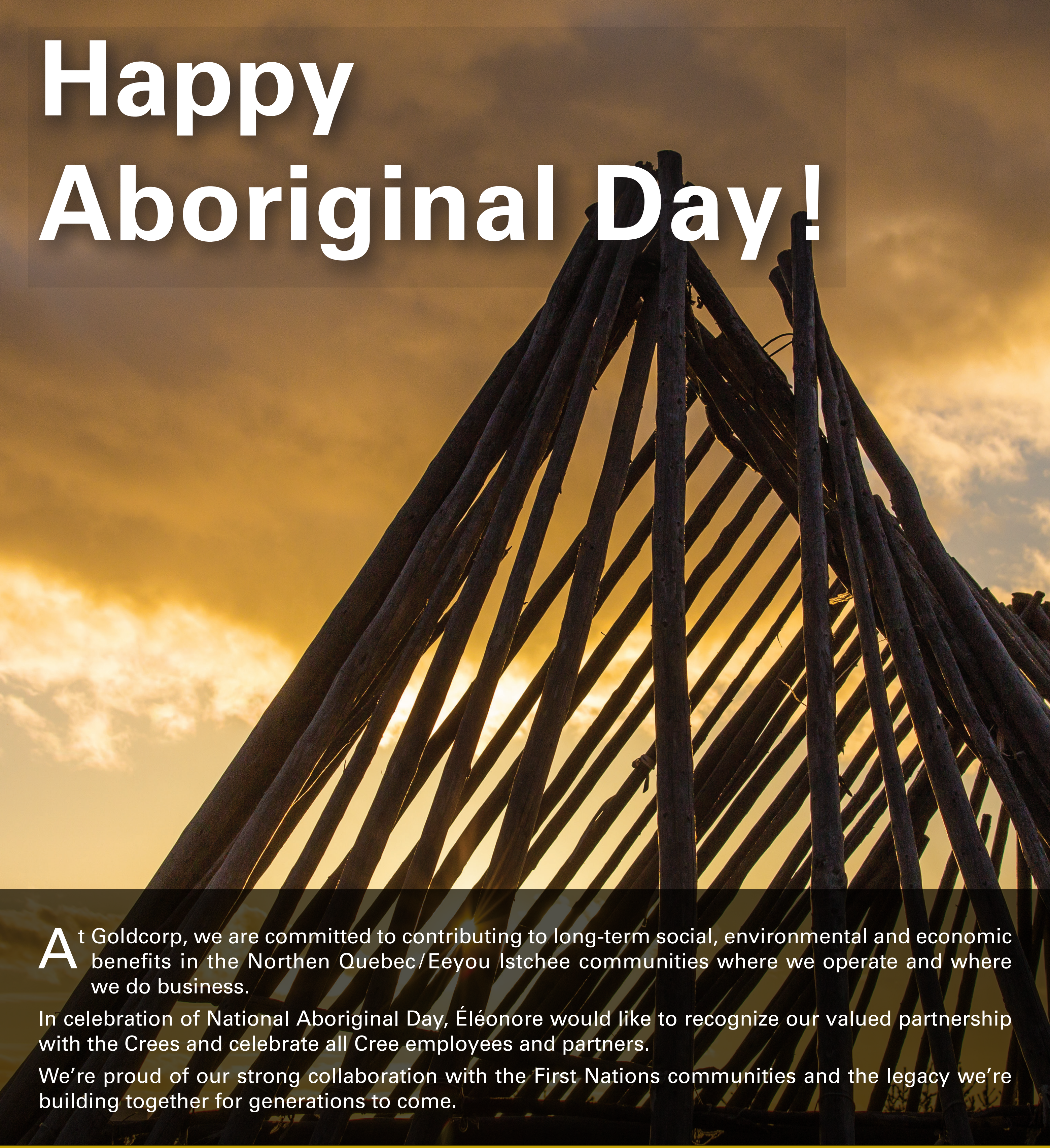

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In celebration of National Aboriginal Day, Éléonore would like to recognize our valued partnership with the Crees and celebrate all Cree employees and partners.

We're proud of our strong collaboration with the First Nations communities and the legacy we're building together for generations to come.

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